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OF

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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE WORTH OF SUFFERING.

"Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."—HEB. XII.

The problem of suffering is not modern, as the experience is not modern. In many respects human thought in the early day was infantine; but in dealing with the problem of suffering it seems to have gone deeper, to have rounded itself up more completely, than in almost any other direction. The speculations which you will find in the book of Job are just as far-reaching, and the musings and the repinings of Solomon are just as distinct as the echoes which you hear in Byron.

This seems to have been one of those themes upon which the human mind exercised itself with more power than upon any other. The theories of evil; the reasons why it should have been brought into the world—these questions have tasked all theologies as well as all philosophies. And they seem to me to be as useless as any questions that possibly can be raised. *Why was evil permitted?* is only in another shape, *Why was the world created as it is?* If the world had been created like a chorded instrument, perfect, and swung into existence with all its chords in tune, then it might be pertinent to inquire, How came it untuned and unstrung? From what source was the evil emptied in upon the world? But since the method of creation was to originate men at the lowest point, and develop them steadily from that point upward, and to do it through the medium of their own personal experience, then *evil* is simply another word for *labor-pain*, or growing-pain. It is part and parcel of the structural relation of men, in time, to social and civil elements. And to ask, Why was evil permitted? is merely to ask, *Why did God make trees so that they cast a shadow?* Why did he not make the light so that it would go through green leaves as it does through transparent glass?—and many other fool-questions.

The theories as to the source or origin of evil have come down in

SUNDAY MORNING, Dec. 31, 1871. Lesson: Heb. XII. Hymns (Plymouth Collection) Nos. 666, 273, 725.

regular sequence, reproducing themselves in one form or another, all the way from the beginning. It was early thought that good and evil proceeded from two spirits. It was believed that there was a divided government. This is the Oriental doctrine to-day. According to this doctrine malign spirits rule in part, whenever they can, and are in perpetual conflict with the divine Spirit. Good comes from God, and evil comes from the evil spirit, it has been supposed.

So evil was regarded as a direct injection, if I may so say. It was thought to be a mischief secreted, as it were, in infernal spirits, and then thrown upon the world.

Then it came to be regarded as a judgment of God. This was a step upward. It was supposed to be a punishment for sin. This was the current impression in the time of our Master; and therefore, as an indispensable corollary, it followed that where men suffered they had been sinful, and that where they were prosperous they were righteous. And yet, though this was a great trouble with Job, he was perpetually showing the contrary. He was an object of great suffering. He was visited by queer comforters. He was cast down in the abjectest misery. But it was not on account of his unrighteousness; for he appealed to God and men to witness his integrity, and showed that suffering came from the hand of a disciplining God. And yet it was generally believed that where men suffered they had been sinning. As I have intimated, our Master; in his own day, found this idea current. When a man was blind, his disciples said to him, "Who hath sinned? He is blind, and of course some one has sinned; who hath done it? Is it this man, or is it his parents?" And the Saviour said, "Neither. Blindness and its suffering are not necessarily indications of moral obliquity."

The modern idea seems to be that all suffering is from the violation of law. This just as partial, and just as imperfect philosophically, and just as crude as either of the other theories. Indeed it is but a modification of the preceding theory; for God is regarded as the expression of the divine law. This view, therefore, may be considered as only a modern way of saying that suffering comes from disobedience to God expressed by his laws.

Now, none of these views is without an element of truth. None of them, however, covers the whole of the facts of human experience. They leave out a transcendent sphere of reality.

Suffering does result, to a certain extent, from the violation of the physical, social, and civil laws which environ men. Where we knowingly or unknowingly transgress laws which are related to the organic conditions of our being, we are punished, and we suffer. Whether we know it or not, improper food induces suffering, un-

suitable clothing induces sickness; exposure induces pain. In a thousand ways we suffer by the violation of law. We suffer in our social relations and in our civil relations perpetually by setting aside established canons or regulations.

We also suffer by derivation. Thus, there are many who have scarcely a well day as long as they live, though they have not sinned against natural law themselves. They have inherited a constitution which subjects them to perpetual unhealth. They are unavoidably compelled to endure innumerable sufferings. It is not their fault that they were born with a tendency to suffering. All the discords and janglings of their system were brought upon them by others' transgressions, and not their own. It is not a man's own fault he has inherited a stomach which is absolutely diseased, and is a fruitful source of numerous other diseases, real or simulated. Moreover, I think that our most acute sufferings are not from what we ourselves do in violation of law, but from what is done upon us. If I put my hand in the fire, I suffer from the violation of law; but if a man throws coals on me, it is not my fault, but his. I suffer from blows that were struck upon me, and from troubles that are caused by other people, though I am walking absolutely in obedience to all natural law. It is in the power of other people to impose suffering upon me. Therefore, to say that suffering would be avoided if men would keep themselves in the line of obedience to natural law, is a very imperfect recipe for happiness in this world.

1. Our sufferings spring from our social liabilities. I do not mean the liabilities to which I have just alluded, of physical infliction. Frequently the keenest sufferings which men are called to endure in this world arise from their sympathetic relations. While love pleases, and is a source of innumerable comforts, it carries with it also the possibilities of great suffering. It is impossible that you should attach yourself to another and not be affected by his prosperity or adversity. We all do "weep with them that weep," and "rejoice with them that do rejoice." We are so united to our friends that we cannot help bearing their burdens. Parents are so affiliated with their children that they themselves may obey every natural, social, and civil law, and yet suffer if those children go wrong. It is not the man that is dissipated that bears the affliction. It is those who love him and are not participators in his sin, who suffer from his trangressions. We are so knitted together in our social relations that the liability for good which those relations carry with them, subjects us also to a corresponding liability for evil. And if you analyze and look into the relations of suffering to actual facts and conditions, it will be largely found that men suffer in this world from

shame, and from mortified pride, and from wounded affection, and from benevolence pierced and oppressed, on account of the misfortunes, the sins, the wrong goings and the wrong doings of those to who they are related socially and morally. And there is no violation of natural law here. Men say, "All suffering would disappear if there were no violation of natural law;" but what obedience to natural law can you imagine that will save a mother or a father from suffering when a child suffers. The child may have violated natural law, and may suffer; and the secondary suffering, or rebound, which comes upon the parent, is worse than the original suffering which the child experiences. Oftentimes the one who is related to the perpetrator of the deed suffers more than the perpetrator himself. It is the friends of the gambler and dissipated man that suffer most. It is not the child that runs into an insanity of the passions who suffers most. It is the one who is the purest, the most sensitive, and the nearest like God, that bears the sins of others. When it is said that Christ bore the sins of others, people argue upon this matter with the most stately ignorance, and say that it is inconsistent with justice and propriety. But it is the grand culmination in that line of facts which characterizes the development of human beings and of society, that just in proportion as men are pure, and upright, and noble, and sensitive in their dispositions, they become capacitated to suffer more and more, not from their own misdoings, but the misdoings of those with whom they are in sympathetic affiliations. He who sins suffers; but as it is not the dead ivory which the thumb strikes that moans or rejoices, but the cord which is connected with the key; so in life, the suffering does not necessarily report itself at the point where the wrong takes place, but in those social connections by which persons are related together—in the chorded hearts of those who are nobler and higher than those by whom the wrong is committed.

3. Our benevolent sympathies produce suffering. That is to say, quite aside from our social relations we suffer by reason of the normal and proper development of our higher faculties. Our nobler nature, our divine manhood, is like a tree of life. Its very leaves are for the healing of the nations. It is full of fragrant blossoms. It is full of luscious fruit. Nevertheless, a man is liable to suffer just in proportion as he is good, by the violation of his benevolent sympathies. The sight, for instance, of gross ignorance, and of the evil which proceeds from it, in this world, is a sight which cannot but bring pain to every sensitive being. If you are selfish enough to hide it, then you save yourself the suffering; but if you are benevolent, and you will not hide it, and you go out and look at it, and

study its meaning, and trace its result, you will suffer. Just in proportion as you are godlike, your benevolence brings suffering to you. If that which we see to be wrong can be remedied by our exertion, then we cease to suffer.

The surgeon, at first, when he is inexperienced, is full of woman's tremulousness; but when he begins to know that there is skill in his hand and knowledge in his head, by which he can relieve the patient, he learns, while inflicting suffering, to be calm, because he knows that by the infliction of suffering he can afford relief.

And in life, when we look on the mass of mankind and see them in their degradation, and are conscious that we have the power and the disposition to pour light upon their experience, and to carry sanity to their insane passions, we do not suffer. But to walk among the dead that yet go about as if they were alive; to see what terrible earthquakes there are; to see what volcanic eruptions there are; to live where you must look upon these things, and where they cannot be hidden from your eyes—this must needs produce suffering in you, if you are a man. Men suffer not alone from their own disobedience, but more from the disobedience of others. Just in proportion to the noblest elements of their being according to the divine law, just in proportion as they round themselves out in the likeness of divinity—in that proportion they are capacitated to suffer through the higher forms of benevolence.

Moreover, suffering in this world belongs to the unfolding process. In other words, it belongs, in the nature of things, to the passage from a lower to a higher stage.

So far, therefore, from suffering being a divine or natural penalty, it is, on the other hand, as I have said, a social liability which increases with the susceptibility and the sweetness of affection. It is a state of facts which develops itself on the actual benevolence of the loftier forms of manhood. And it is one of those things which makes the transition from the lower to the higher, all the way up.

Now, that men are builded—literally, I had almost said—in their better parts upon their grosser elements; that the higher developments of the mind are superimposed upon the lower; that men grow in grace by reason of the exercise of their worldly faculties; that from the stalk below shoot out and elongate, as it were, the higher forms of experience—these things it needs no words of mine to prove. It is true that there is often and often a very marked development of manhood from a lower to a higher stage. For instance, we not unfrequently see the passage of a man from predominant pride to glorious humility. And the passage is one of pain and suffering. As when men are born into life they come with labor-pain

and with outcry; so, afterward, there are successive developments of birth again in each particular faculty, or in groups of faculties, as they rise to higher stages. Men go through conflicts, they go through severe pangs, on their way to the realization of that to which they aspire. They reach the higher conditions of enjoyment often through the hell-gate of suffering. And no man can exempt himself from suffering when rising from a lower to a higher stage. But of that more hereafter.

Let us, then, divest ourselves from all crude and unfounded notions in respect to suffering, as though it were either the infliction of a malign divinity, or the penalty of some violation by us of natural law, or as if it had no other than a primitive end to subserve. Suffering, while it has a restraining function, and while it has also a primitive function, needs to be augmented, until we shall find in it a stimulating power, an educating power, and a joy-bearing power. For the best forms of suffering are not those low and muzzling experiences which lie close to the earth, or to the earthly passions. The sublimest sufferings are those which men bear in the topmost branches of their nature.

We will now look at suffering principally as being a part of the divine economy by which God augments the influence of higher motives, by which he punishes; and by which, also, he stimulates, enlarges, adjudicates, and makes potent and glorious the whole human, mental structure.

Looking at the actual experience of suffering in this world, I remark, *First*, that it is seldom continuous. We are liable, in preaching a whole sermon on the subject of suffering, to produce an impression that it does not intermit. We are liable to make it seem to be a garment which men put on and wear. Whereas, in point of fact, the developments of suffering are occasional, after all; and those who suffer have long periods of exemption from suffering. From the experience of people at large, the economy of God is such that suffering bears a very small proportion to the enjoyment of life. It is probable that suffering would produce morbid conditions if it were prolonged, constant, and uniform. But the intervals of suffering are long, and the joys which alternate with it are many. Ordinarily we see that the amount which men suffer is very small compared with their low-toned enjoyments, at morning, noon and night. The quiet pleasures of social intercourse; the satisfaction which comes from the legitimate exercise of all our faculties; the joy consequent upon activity, and the excitements of it; the remunerations of thought; the pleasure of ingathering knowledge; the happiness which results from the minor play of our social sympathies; the

enjoyment which comes from the ten thousand little sidelong influences which ray out from us, and reach unto us as we walk among men—how these things solace life, and bear men up with strength, so that by and by when there comes a gloomy day, they are able to bear the suffering which it inflicts!

Too often it is the case that men remember their sorrow, and do not register their joy. But even under afflictions, if men did but know it, there are musical tones which might strike through the requium's wail. There are lights that might illumine their dark, Rembrandtian sorrows. Men fall into a mania. Sorrow takes on a diseased form. It becomes morbid. It whets and stimulates itself. It ferments. It overflows. It tinges the whole mind from top to bottom with its color. As just after a drenching rain every twig on the tree is fringed with the drops, and every leaf weeps; and, as when some gust of wind strikes it the tree rains again, as if it were a cloud; so, when sad experience comes upon us, we are apt to be remorseless with ourselves, and to work upon our own susceptibilities. We do not put hope over against despair; and cheer over against gloom. Therefore much of the suffering which men have in life, much of the gloom which they are under, results from the not using of themselves wisely. I see in many who come to me a morbid taste for suffering. It is a hideous form of excitement. Persons at last even come to a state in which they want to suffer—or rather, want to be thought to suffer. They want to reap in the fields of sympathy this abnormal, and what seems to me, hideous praise of seeming to suffer. Sometimes no greater offence can be given than to compliment persons on their health, and happiness, and prosperity. For they are martyrs, and they walk under a cape of sadness; and not to recognise that, is to deny them the chief pleasure almost of their life. To be miserable is their joy!

Secondly, Suffering, when it results from moral causes, has in it a victorious element. If you look upon what is called *suffering*, it is not one unmitigated ache. It is not one continued cloud that hides the sun all day and all night. Even in the minor relations of life it intermits, and joys sparkle in it. It has its night, and its hours of cloud; but for the most part it has wider spaces of clear sky than spaces that are dark and overcast. And when you rise from this lower form to suffering of the moral nature, there is almost always in that (and there may be always) a victorious element.

There is nothing more certain than that moral sufferings carry great joys. For instance, there is triumph where there is suffering that has self-denial in it, and where that self-denial means the emancipation of nobler elements from the bondage of lower ones.

That which is good in a man—his conscience, his faith, his benevolence, his purity—struggles with the appetites and passions which have been in the ascendant, and thrusts them back, and throws them down, and rises up out of its degradation by the lower feelings, and triumphs; and the right is in the ascendency again. When such a victory takes place, when a right feeling in a man gains ascendency over a wrong feeling, there is pain, but it is pain of the lower nature. And there is also joy of the higher nature.

The paradox of Scripture is seen in human life all the time. The apostle speaks of rejoicing in his afflictions, and of the consolations by which he was comforted in his sorrow, that thereby he might console those who were in affliction. We see the same thing in human life; and we understand how it is that suffering and the highest joy can go together. As discords resolve themselves into the sweetest harmonies; as the impetuous roar of dashing music gives to the silence during the pauses a magical charm; so we see in the actual experiences of human life that those sorrows which are hardest to bear carry with them wings of joy; so that though the soul may fly in a clouded atmosphere, it flies singing, and rises higher and higher towards the cloudless land. Therefore suffering in all the higher forms in this life is joy as well as suffering.

Thirdly, Suffering in all noble and growing natures finally becomes an element of harmony. And so it ought to waste itself. That is, the suffering should grow less and less, and the joy should grow more and more. If you have ever watched the process by which one tunes a piano, you will understand what I mean. When the concert-pitch is taken from the tuning fork, a chord is brought up to that pitch to become a standard. And then the next note is taken, and as the tuning key is put upon the chord, and is turned, and turned, this chord is a great way wrong, if that one is right. But little by little, as the man turns, it rises up into its place. For a while, it makes a hideous noise like the wailing of a cat; but it is on its way toward harmony; and by and by no discord remains but a little in the air; and at last none is heard.

So it is in our natures. Where suffering is doing its proper work, it is all the time bringing our discordant feelings to a point where they harmonize themselves. We tend by nature to grow rank; and in favorable circumstances we grow very rank and lush. What we need, therefore, much more than anything else, is discipline, restraint. As without breaking and without the harness the colt is worthless, so man, who is a wild colt indeed, in order to be as useful as he is capable of being, needs more breaking, more training, more harnessing, and more hard work. It is not when a man is in

prosperity, and unrestrained—when he is fattening on oats, as it were—that he is most in harmony with himself and so with the best interests of society. It is suffering that teaches men, and brings their feelings in unison one with another.

Thus, there is a commonwealth in a man's nature, and every part of it is more or less cultured by the fact of suffering. Men who go out into life, and are not held in by any experience of suffering, and are strong and prosperous on every side, hardly know themselves. Self-knowledge comes largely through the strokes of suffering. And suffering is a hard school-master—with mercy, often; but it is a school-master; and a man who has suffered a great deal cannot be ignorant of himself—especially if his suffering be of the higher forms.

Nor is it possible for one to have suffering without finding out some way to bear it. The object of suffering is to give equipoise and discipline to the mind; and you cannot suffer much without giving, as I might say, that proportion and balance of things on which the fruit of manhood depends.

A vine planted in a rich soil tends to outgrow its fruit. It grows rank, and runs and rushes over the trellis. Then comes the vintner with his pruning-knife and cuts it back. He will not suffer it to bear leaves alone, but compels it to bear grapes. And so when, according to the tendency of our nature, we grow rank, and bear leaves in abundance, but no fruit, we are put upon a course of discipline, we are cut back, and are brought into some sort of proportion. We need to be cut back; and suffering is the pruning-knife that does the work

Suffering becomes, also, a matter of patience and strength. We see in life that no characters are so admirable as those that have been shaped by a great deal of suffering. Dr. Spurzheim, among a thousand other insights and maxims of wisdom, said that no woman was fitted to become a wife until she had seen suffering. I would only correct it by adding that no man is fitted to become a husband who has not seen some suffering. Suffering on manly natures has a ripening influence. It certainly tends to produce patience, inwardness. It tends to wean one from superficiality. It tends to drive one in upon those fountains, those sources of life, that not only are inward but are the most profound. It tends to deepen.

You will see that when brooks flow from the mountains, though as they begin to go down they move gently and smoothly and sweetly, yet when at last they come to the chasm, the waters plunge down suddenly to the bottom and finding no outlet, whirl round and round and round, and, seizing a rock which happens to be

there, turn it over and over and over perpetually, and wear the place deeper and deeper, so that it never becomes dry. And it is troubles which roll about in men's souls that dig deep places in them which even in the droughts of summer never are dry.

So it is said that sorrow *worketh*. Look at some of those exquisite and extraordinarily rare workings in iron at old Nuremberg (one of the most charming, I think, of the cities of Europe), in the cathedral. Do you suppose the iron was just pinched out into shape? How many strokes did it receive? How many hittings did it undergo on the anvil? How was it beaten here and there? How was it bent forward, and backward, and forward, and backward again? How was it distorted and contorted? How was it worked and worked till by and by it was covered with little specules as multitudinous as those in frost-pictures, and more delicate and more permanent? They were wrought out by incessant workings in the fire, and on the anvil, under the hammer. Suffering makes a man, or spoils him. A good many are spoiled in the making.

In the passage which we have selected for our text it is said, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous." Oh no! Whenever you will find an apple that is ripe as soon as the blossoms have fallen, I will find you sufferings that are joyous right off. Sufferings have to get through their growth; and they are always sour in growing. No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. And it is just as grievous as it seems; but it is not so exclusive as it seems. There is something else besides your sorrow and afflictions in this world. If you were to sit in the edge of the evening and hear only the hootings of the owl, you would not hear all, nor the pleasantest sounds that were in the air. There is the whippoorwill in the fields. There is the nightingale in the thicket. There is something besides owls. And if you sit and only think of the noises which they make, these will be predominant in your mind; but it will not be because there are not other sounds about you. "No chastening for the present *seemeth* to be joyous," not only, but none *is* joyous. It is grievous.

"*Nevertheless—!*" That "nevertheless" always seemed to me like a golden door thrown open to a man, who stood in a dreary, stained passage, and disclosed to him a gorgeous parlor full of all brightness and beauty. "Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby."

Ah, it is not dull, dumb, stupid suffering. It is suffering that stirs a man up. It is suffering that digs wells of salvation in him.

It is suffering that comes like the pruning-knife on the vine, and stirs the blood of the vine to do a better work than leaf-making. It is suffering that operates like a whip on the child, that reminds him of his sin, and spurs him to action in the right direction. It is like everything that stimulates and develops in life, to "them that are exercised thereby." But in those that throw up their hands and say, "All is lost!" suffering is only evil. To those who turn from it, saying, "Let me eat and drink, and find pleasure to-day, for to-morrow I die," suffering yields no benefit. Suffering is not wholesome where it makes men say, as the vulgar people of the wilderness did, "In Egypt we had leeks and onions and melons, and here we are starving and dying." Is it not better to starve and die as freemen in the wilderness, than to live as slaves in Egypt and have onions? To some, suffering comes only to make them howl and cry and whine, and ask to know how to get rid of it. Put the saddle of patience on your back, and say to suffering, "Mount and ride me;" and take the bit in your mouth and be "exercised." Be broken. Be trained. Be disciplined. Go through the drill. Bear your suffering till you know that your are master of it, as at first it was the master of you.

There comes a time, after anger, after despondency, after gloom, when one begins to submit himself to suffering. As a dove, supposing himself to be caught by the eagle, struggles to free himself, and then, looking up and finding that it is not the eagle but his masters hand that holds him, and knowing that it will not be hurt, ceases to struggle; so men's spirits rise against suffering, and strive against it vehemently, till there comes a moment when there is the realization of divine grace and reconciliation; and then that which is meant by being *exercised thereby* is perfected; and suffering begins to blossom into joy, and sorrows begin to die away in pleasures.

Blessed are they who have come to that time. How far off it is in obstinate natures! Between the "now," when suffering is "grievous," and the "afterwards" when it "yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness," there is a very long and weary way to some people. It might be a short way if we were only wisely educated in childhood in the direction of spiritual things. God's spirit is one of joy, and makes suffering only because, out of it, afterwards, come a higher joy, a better manhood, a nobler atmosphere, a sweeter song, and a more heavenly affection.

See also what Paul says, in Romans, on this matter:

"Not only so, but we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience."

A person who, living in this life, is carried along on the smooth

river; a person who lives a beautiful purple or golden life, floating down and down between protecting boughs, always tranquil, always calm; a person who has such a voyage in life is not thicker than a leaf, and is not worth more. But men who have been stirred up; men who have been put to their wits' ends a hundred times; men who have fought against despair; men who have known what it was to have their backs crack to breaking, almost, and yet have shouldered their load, and carried it without groaning—such men have had experience.

Some men think that experiences are like so many plates that may be taken and set around on a table; but no, experience is the child of sorrow. He is a first-born son, worthy to inherit the blessing.

But let us see again what it is that Paul says:

"We glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience."

Wait long enough, and have enough of tribulation, and then will come patience. And this patience will bring experience. We go through the door of despondency into suffering, and we come out through the door of hope. And by this process men grow more manly and more confident. The confidence is often a great way along, but it comes where there is patience under tribulation. And when I look out and see among my acquaintances noble persons who, having gone through the experience of suffering, have attained the fruit thereof, my heart is filled with joy and gratitude.

Is there anybody who enjoys as much as I do the little children on the street? They are a perpetual anthem to me. I thank God every growing year of my life that there is so much that is sweet and beautiful in childhood! They come to me like so many songs. And it is not that they are my own or my neighbors' children, but that they are God's children. The street is full of them; and no picture that was ever painted is so beautiful to me as the scene which they present. And when they have passed from childhood to youth, my interest in them is not abated. It is a joyous spectacle to see their growth and development toward manhood and womanhood. And is there any one who sees them when they walk to the altar to take upon them the vows of the marriage hour, without feeling an inexpressible sympathy for them. Not when I lay persons in the grave, and say the last words of love over them, is my heart touched as much as when I pronounce a benediction on those who are starting in life. And yet, neither children, nor youth, nor those who are entering upon the full flush of manly joy, are to me half so beautiful as are those revered persons whose faces are seamed and marked with care, and who have come out sweet-eyed, having

gone through suffering. When persons have grown up, and married, and become parents, and lost their children, or borne with the long infirmities and crimes of their children, and had the weight of life come crushingly upon them,—but have yet risen in the divine strength above their troubles, and stand with their sufferings registered in lines upon their forehead, in those lips which have lost their fullness and pristine beauty, and in their gray hairs, with a noble halo surrounding them in their old age—what can be more beautiful than their hope and sweet serenity! It makes us wonder that the angels do not take them home. Such persons constitute to me the highest ideal of earthly beauty. And they furnish an example of what suffering does if it is only allowed to have its perfect work, according to the economy by which it is administered in the system of divine grace.

Not only is suffering an experience which works blessedly thus, but in the divine economy it becomes the very test of love, the very test of heroism, and the very test of Christ's likeness. I do not think it is so much what we are willing to do for others, as what we are willing to suffer for them, that tests how much we love them. You love just in proportion as you are willing to suffer rather than that another should suffer. You do not love in proportion as you feel happy in the presence of others, nor in proportion as you make them happy. You may be made happy by them, or they may be made happy by you, where no great love exists. The proportion in which you have the real good of a person, and his true nobility, at heart—the proportion in which you are yourself willing to suffer for the sake of his welfare—that tests your love, and brings you at once into the ranks as a follower of Him, who, "though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

In view of these statements, I remark, in closing:

First, that suffering is not to be sought, as if it were good in and of itself. All true and beneficial suffering, morally considered, will spring up out of the exigencies of life, and will adapt itself to the actual states and conditions of our mind. There is a marked difference between a proper spirit of self-denial and a spirit of asceticism. Many persons suppose that because suffering is good under certain circumstances, it is good under all circumstances; and they deny themselves proper pleasures, and avoid wholesome relations in society. But that is not God's way. God's way is to lead men to seek joy and happiness, and to go along in life seeking all that life has which can be had in consistence with their highest good. And when suffering comes, springing out of moral exigencies or social cir-

cumstances, then is the time to take it, and bear it, and perfect the the character by it.

It is not to be avoided, either, as the greatest of evils, for ourselves or for our children. It is right for us to select our own path, and to lay our plans for our childrens' life, so as not to bring a suffering upon ourselves or them by a violation of law; but to undertake to build around our children a shell into which they can draw themselves the moment there is any threat, is to make them little better than shell-fish. To be so placed that you cannot suffer is almost to be placed so that you cannot be educated. We are to teach our children to seek the noblest ends by the noblest ways in life, no matter what may be the risks connected with those ways; and then they will be adequate to whatever exigency they may be called to go through. It is not wise to attempt to carry them through shattered paths. If God carries them through such paths, well and good; and if he carries them through exposed paths, well and good. The young officer, if necessary, bears his general's commands right across the open field, which is swept by artillery and musketry.

It is best to bring our children up to courage and hardihood, and not to think how we shall save them from suffering; for suffering has in it a divine mission.

I remark, once more, that it is not wise, when we are suffering, to look back too much for the causes of our suffering, or to question what it can have been sent for, or why God deals so with us.

Look at the murmuring of a young mother. Her life was one flush of joy so long as her cradle was to her like the gate of heaven; but the cradle is desolate; and she sits alone; and she says, "What have I done? Why has God been so cruel to me? I am as good as as they are over there, and I have lost my only child, and they have five or six children, and God has taken none of theirs. And they are not bringing up their children as I would have brought up mine."

Oh, foolish creature! do you suppose all suffering is sent according to desert? Suffering comes as summer does. A wise way to to take summer is not to say; "I wonder if God sent this summer that I might raise a hundred bushels of wheat or a hundred bushels of corn." Did God think of any such thing as that? No. He willed it so that you might determine what should be the results of the summer.

Now, God puts you under a discipline of suffering, and leaves you to say, not this: "Where did it come from?" but this: "What can I do with it?" It is not for you to say, "Why was I sick?" but, "Having been overtaken by sickness, what can I do with it?"

We are not to say, "Why did I lose such a friend?" but, "Having lost such a friend, how shall I be more a man in consequence?" Ask "How shall I see the bright lining that is beyond the dark cloud?" In other words, study suffering through the lens of hope. Look forward, and not backward.

Suffering may be a rod to chastise. It may be a scepter to empower. Make it a scepter. Rule in it, and rule over it. So God rules in you.

One word more. All suffering is in the hands of the Sufferer. It is a dispensation; made up of many parts; and it is mysterious because we know only a part of it. We see only in part. We shall not know as we are known until by and by. But, after all, we are told that God presides over nature, and over providence, and over grace, as a loving Father; and Jesus Christ, the Sufferer, who gave himself rather than that men should die, stands up to intercede for us; and the Holy Spirit is set forth as the almighty and ineffable benefactor. We are carrying on our life under the presiding counsels of a God who knows what suffering is good for; and what it can do. There is a Heart of the universe that is warm with love, and that beats above you with infinite sympathy. You have not a God who has no impulse to praise. And even when he blames he comforts and consoles you as no mother ever comforted and consoled her weeping child—if you will.

It is for you, then, to take the consolations which are in the bosom of God; it is for you to accept the mercy which he proffers you; it is for you to avail yourself of the peace which he gives you; it is for you to gain victories over yourselves and over your circumstances; and then it is for you to rise up and be witnesses before the world that it is Christ who has taught you to suffer, and given you victories in suffering. You are bound to be witnesses that your strength and patience and wisdom were gifts of God through the royalty of a suffering which, *though for the present it is not joyous but grievous, it afterwards works out the peaceable fruit of righteousness.*

When you are old, and you look back on your life, and see the suffering that you have gone through, you will rejoice that you have gone through it all. When you look over the rough ground which you have traversed, and along the thorny path which has led you up to purity and faith and hope, you will have the feeling, "Thank God that I did suffer!"

When I look upon my past life, I count not those the most fortunate periods when I enjoyed the most at the time; but those when I suffered the most and was able to bear the suffering. I remember

many defeats, and many shames and humiliations in suffering; but, after all, the times when God strengthened me to bear it, and to rise above it, and to make it a wing by which to lift myself up above the surface of the murky earth, are now the most precious experiences of my memory.

May God give you grace to suffer when suffering is best for you. And if you walk through the fire and the flood he will be with you. He led his people through water and through fire, and across the wilderness, into the promised land; and he will bring you there if you will put your trust in him. Live in this life by love and by faith; and you will enter upon the life to come with joy and victory.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice, our heavenly Father, that thou art such an one as to be approached by the imperfect and the sinful. We rejoice that thou art thyself a supreme and universal Remedy for imperfection; and that thou bearest in thyself a love that forgives, that chastens, that purifies. We draw near to thee, not as those who are worthy to come. Conscious of our inferiority, of our infirmities, of our multitudinous transgressions, we draw near to thee knowing how unworthy we are, but knowing how great is that goodness which we approach. We rejoice in thy benignity. We rejoice in thy tenderness and pity. We rejoice that it is not inconsistent with justice and with truth to forgive and to restore, and that thou wouldst not have any to perish, but that thou wouldst rather that all should turn and live.

Now, we desire to turn away from everything that is wrong, from all that which thou hast revealed, from all that we have discovered in our own experience, from all selfishness, from all pride, from all evil passions, from whatever is inconsistent with truth and rectitude. We desire to heartily repent of our transgressions, and to begin a life amended and aspiring—a life that shall bring us into harmony with thee and thine. And grant, we pray, that we may have to-day falling upon us that inspiration of the Holy Ghost by which we shall know that our petition is accepted. May we follow the light and the strivings of thy power. May there be that in us which shall call out, Abba, Father. And may we cling to thee and to thy promises; finding in that direction our way, learning that our manhood lies toward thee, and that our power and our joy are from above. And may we seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth, at the right hand of God.

We pray that thou wilt grant unto us, to-day, thy presence. Wilt thou grant the ministrations of consolation to those who are in trouble. Grant light to those that are in darkness; strength to those that are consciously feeble; direction to those that are in perplexity of mind; patience to those whose courage is ready to fail. Grant that they may break forth into joy who have been desolate; having that comfort wherewith thou dost console. May there be more joy than there has been sorrow in the strokes with which thou hast afflicted them.

We pray, O Lord our God, that thou wilt grant thy blessings to rest on those heads of households upon whom thou hast laid the burdens of chil-

dren. May they have wisdom given them whereby to rear their children for Christ and for the eternal sphere. Grant that they may have grace given them that their strength, and their courage, and their hope may not fail. And may they and their children be saved by hope.

We pray for all the young; for all those that have been consecrated in the public assembly; and for all those that have been consecrated in the closet; and for all those over whom have been uttered many prayers, and upon whose cradles have been shed many tears. We thank thee that so many of them are growing up in knowledge and truth and piety. We thank thee that so many of them walk orderly with us in the way of the sanctuary. We pray for any that are wandering; for any that are in forbidden paths. Wilt the Lord God grant that they may yet be brought back to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. We pray that parents may never be discouraged, and give over their children. May they still wait upon disappointment after disappointment, never yielding up their courage.

Grant, we pray thee, that a blessing may rest upon those who are gathered providentially with us from afar; upon those that are going and are beginning with high hope and promise. Keep them from defilement. Keep them from stumbling into untruth and dishonor. Keep them in that righteousness which is of God. Prosper them, not only outwardly, but still more inwardly, and may they have that true manhood in Christ Jesus from which all joy must spring that abides- abides in life, and abides in death.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those who are endeavoring to bear the cross of Christ, and to fulfill their duties under difficulties and in darkness and trouble. May they never be beyond the reach of thy voice. May they know how to find thee in darkness. May they stay themselves upon thee at all times and everywhere.

We pray for all those who are working, by self-denial, by yielding themselves willingly, and by sacrificing themselves for others, to fulfill the royal law of love. Bless them abundantly in their own hearts, and sustain them in the way in which they endeavor to walk.

Bless those who are mourning. Sanctify their sorrow to them. Be with all those who are now watching in the midst of fear. Be in the sick chamber, where thy servants are with their children or friends. Be a present help in time of trouble. We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt speak in the darkness to souls that are alarmed and distressed comfortable words of assurance which they never could hear in the light. In the twilight, and in the midnight as well as in the rising morn, leave not thy people nor forsake them.

We pray that thy judgments and mercies may strive together; we pray that the whole course of care, and labor, and burden, and fear, and suffering may interpret themselves in truth and Godliness. May we be able to abide them all. And in searching thy councils and in asking how we may profit by thy dealings with us, may we be led on from step to step until we are able to realize that thou art the Father, and that thy chastisements have been administered through love, and have wrought toward perfection.

Let thy blessing rest upon all the churches of this city, and of the great city near us. Wilt thou bless thy servants who minister in holy things. Inspire them with more and more wisdom to utter the truth, and apply it to the needs of men.

Be mindful of all those who are laboring for the reformation of morals; for all those who carry the Gospel to the poor and to the outcast. And may all those who build up institutions more firmly in righteousness. and those who seek to purge and purify the administration of justice, be sustained and strengthened by the might of God. Let human passions be restrained by those influences which are at work for the establishment of justice and rectitude.

We beseech that thou wilt bless our land. Remember the President in the United States, and all his Cabinet who are in council with him. Remember the Congress of the United States assembled. Grant, we pray thee, that wisdom may descend from on high, and that our councillors may be reconciled of God, and that all things which transpire may be overruled by the true prosperity of this nation. And we pray that our prosperity may be joined to the welfare of all other nations. And in all the earth may we begin to discern the lineaments of that great commonwealth which shall exist when all men shall love all men, when all the earth, beloved of God, shall return the love of God, and when the new heaven and the new earth in which dwelleth righteousness shall come. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly, for the whole earth doth wait for thee.

And to thy name, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, shall be praises everlasting. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, wilt thou bless the word which we have spoken, and grant that it may sink deep into the heart and do good. We pray that thou wilt open the eyes of those who are suffering. May they see the heavens filled with the angels and chariots of God. May they feel that more are they that are for them than they that are against them. In every hour of trouble may they know how to find rescue. May they find comfort in the presence and sympathy and power and promises of Jesus Christ, In the hope of victory, in the certainty of life and immortality beyond, may they find strength and consolation.

Grant, we pray thee, thy blessing to rest upon all the hours of the day that remain. Bless our homes and our friendships and our aspirations of life. And finally bring us, crowned with joy and victory, to our heavenly home, through riches of grace in Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

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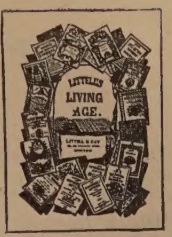

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